

Improving the A47

Blofield to North Burlingham dualling

Public consultation



Improving the A47 corridor:

We are improving the A47 around Peterborough, Norwich and Great Yarmouth to create better, safer journeys.

1. Introduction

About us

Highways England is the government owned company charged with operating, maintaining and improving England's motorways and major A roads. Formerly the Highways Agency, we became a government owned company in 2015.

About the A47 corridor improvement scheme

In 2014 the government published the Road Investment Strategy (RIS) setting out a £15.1 billion investment for 2015-2020 to improve journeys on England's motorways and major A roads.

The RIS includes a package of 6 schemes to improve journeys on the 115 mile section of the A47 between Peterborough and Great Yarmouth. Together, the proposals will relieve congestion and improve the reliability of journey times for drivers.

The A47 trunk road forms part of the strategic road network and provides for a variety of local, medium and long distance trips between the A1 and the east coast. The corridor connects the cities of Norwich and Peterborough, the towns of Wisbech, Kings Lynn, Dereham, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft and a succession of villages in what is largely a rural area.

The schemes include converting almost 8 miles of single carriageway to dual carriageway and making improvements to junctions across the route.

The 6 schemes are:

- A47 Wansford to Sutton dualling
- A47 Guyhirn junction improvement
- A47 North Tuddenham to Easton dualling
- A47 Blofield to North Burlingham dualling
- A47/A11 Thickthorn junction improvement
- A47 Great Yarmouth junction improvements (Formerly A47/A12 junction enhancements)

We are consulting on all 6 schemes at the same time. **In this brochure, you can find out more about the A47 Blofield to North Burlingham dualling.** To find out more about the other schemes or request a copy of the consultation brochure, please visit:



Online:

www.highways.gov.uk/a47improvement



Email:

A47BlofieldtoNorthBurlinghamRIS@highwaysengland.co.uk

In total, over £2 billion is being invested in the East of England to create better and safer journeys across the region.

We want your views

We are consulting on proposals to improve the A47 between Blofield and North Burlingham. Our proposals will create a new dual carriageway that will relieve congestion, provide extra road space, improve safety and help provide a free-flowing network.

This consultation provides you with an opportunity to view, discuss and help shape our proposals. This will help us understand what is important to our customers and local communities, and informs the selection of a preferred route.

We are working closely with local authorities to ensure that our proposals align with local and regional plans and aspirations for growth.

There will be a further public consultation before a formal application for a Development Consent Order is made.

The consultation will run for 6 weeks from Monday 13 March to Friday 21 April 2017.

2. Need for the scheme

Approximately half of the A47 is already dual carriageway standard, but the section between Blofield and North Burlingham is still single carriageway. This section acts as a bottleneck, resulting in congestion and leading to longer and unreliable journey times. This section of the A47 also has a poor safety record.

There are a number of reasons for these problems. Our investigations to date, have highlighted these as:

- Difficulty of accessing and crossing the A47
- Standard of the road and junctions
- Traffic levels outgrowing the capacity of the road, causing tailbacks and delays
- Limited opportunities for overtaking slower moving vehicles
- Development in the local area

The delays on this stretch of the A47 are forecast to worsen if nothing is done to improve capacity and connectivity.

In developing this scheme, we aim to address these issues by upgrading this section of the A47 to a high quality dual carriageway.

The improvements will support economic growth by making journeys safer and more reliable.

3. Scheme objectives

Highways England's Strategic Business Plan sets out the objectives of the proposed A47 Blofield to North Burlingham dualling scheme as:

■ Supporting economic growth

Contributing to sustainable economic growth by supporting employment and residential development opportunities. The scheme aims to reduce congestion-related delay, improve journey time reliability and increase the overall capacity of the A47.

■ A safe and serviceable network

Improving road safety for all road users by designing to modern highway standards appropriate for a major A road.

■ A more free-flowing network

Increasing the resilience of the road in coping with incidents such as collisions, breakdowns, maintenance and extreme weather. The improved route between Blofield and North Burlingham will be more reliable, reducing journey times and providing capacity for future traffic growth.

■ Improved environment

Protecting the environment by minimising adverse impacts and, where possible, improving the environmental effects of the scheme on those living along the route.

■ An accessible and integrated network

Ensuring the proposals take into account local communities and access to the road network, providing a safer route between communities for cyclists, pedestrians, equestrians and other non-motorised groups.

■ Value for money

Ensuring that the scheme is affordable and delivers good value for money.

Learning from previous proposals

A previous scheme to improve this section of road was presented for consultation in 2008. A preferred route was announced in 2009, but not developed further at that time. Since then we have reviewed whether the 2009 route is still an appropriate solution and have also developed a number of other route options.

4. Our proposed options

We have developed 4 route options for consultation.

- Dualling the existing A47.
- Building a new dual carriageway to the north and to the south of the existing A47.
- Building a new dual carriageway to the south of the existing A47.
- Building a new dual carriageway to the south of the existing A47.

Where we propose to build a new road, the existing carriageway will be retained for access to fields, farms, properties and for non-motorists.

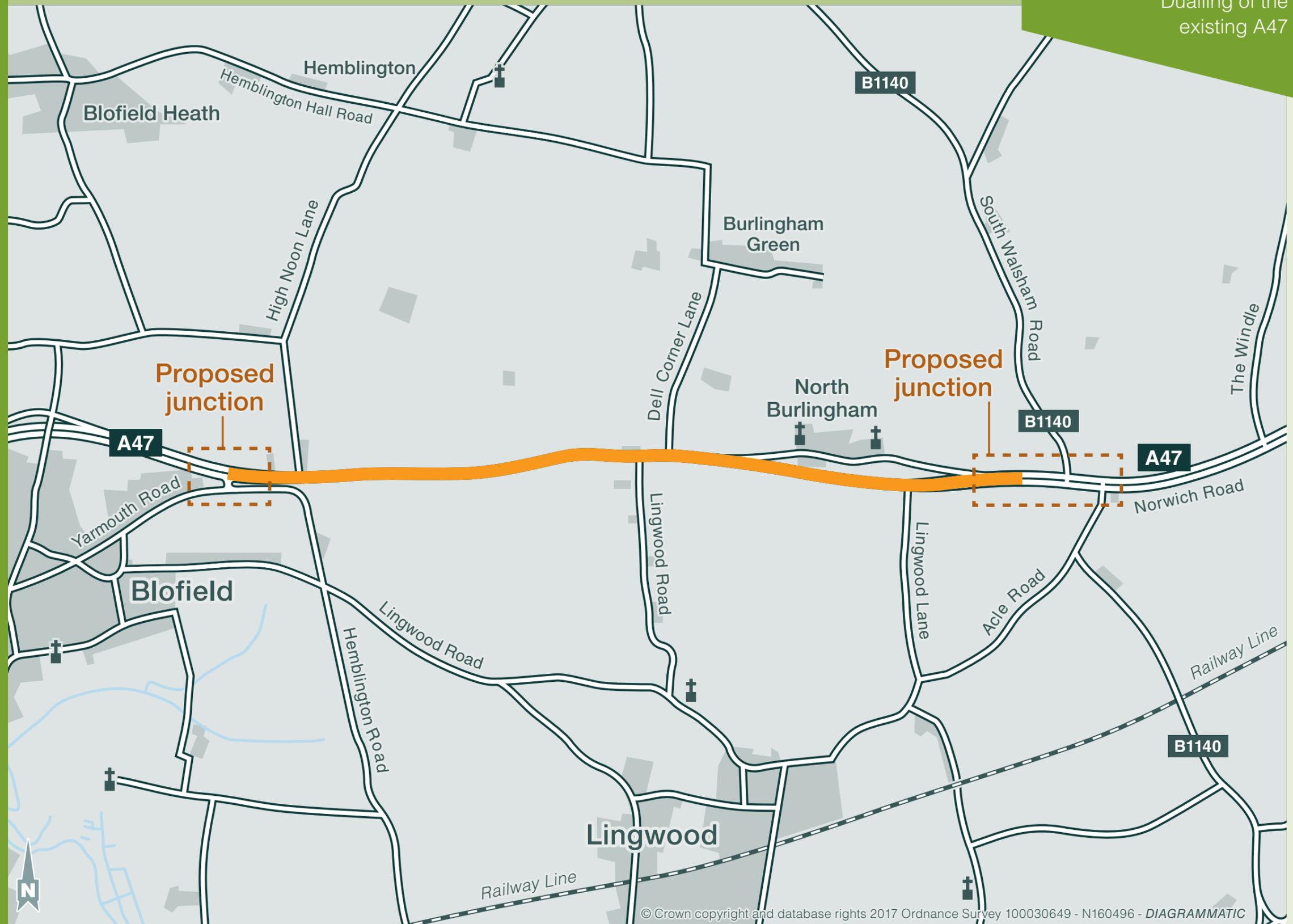
Proposed option 1

Option 1 proposes dualling the existing A47 with the following:

- Improve the single carriageway section of the A47 between Blofield and North Burlingham to dual carriageway standard by constructing a new section of dual carriageway. The new carriageway will include new junctions.
- This option would attempt to use as much of the existing carriageway as possible. However, due to the differences between single and dual carriageway standards, it may not be possible to achieve this in all locations.

Proposed option 1

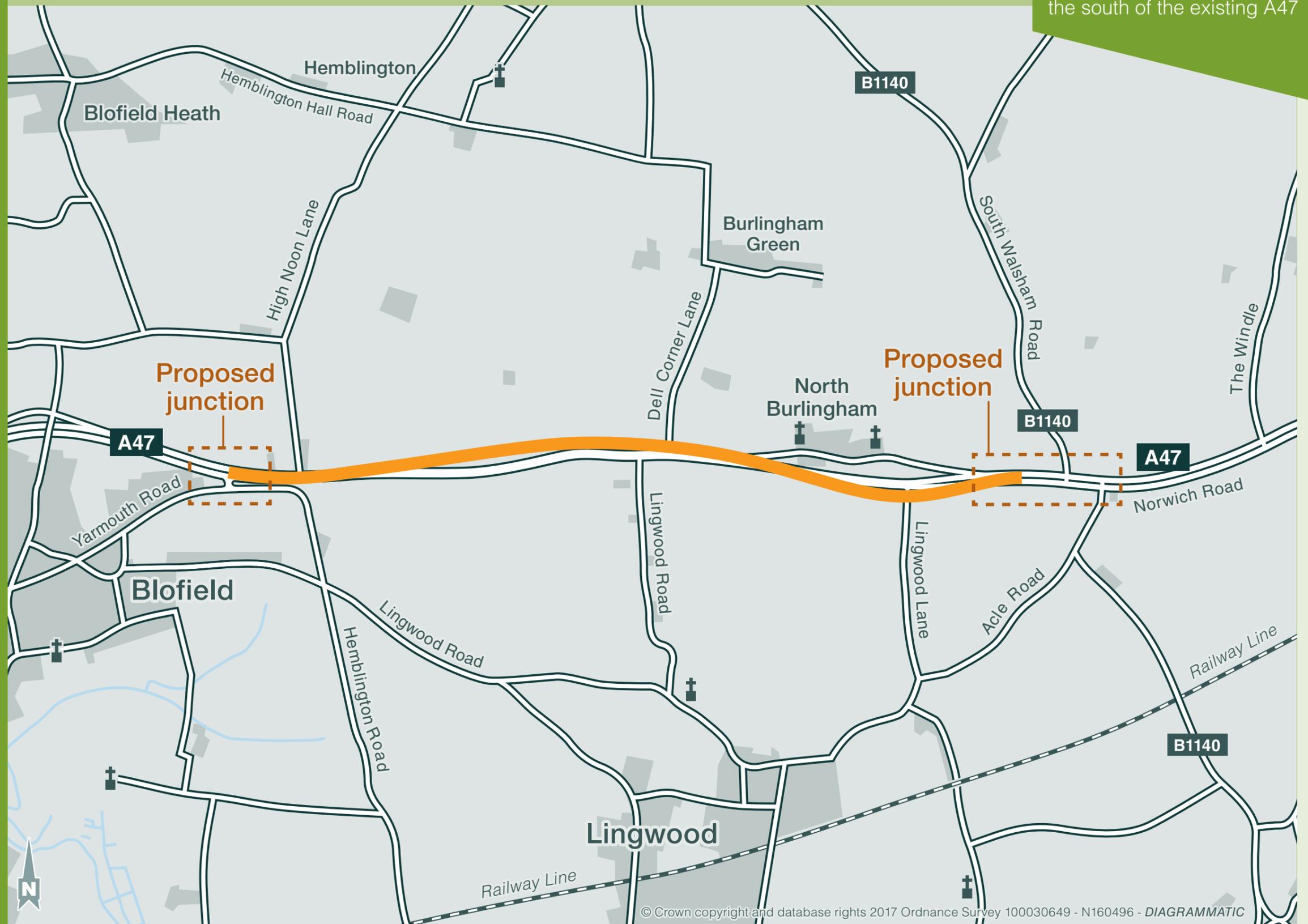
Dualling of the existing A47



Proposed option 2

Option 2 proposes building a new dual carriageway to the north and to the south of the existing A47 with the following:

- The proposed new dual carriageway runs to the north of the A47 as the route heads east away from the village of Blofield and to the south of the existing A47 as the route passes the village of North Burlingham, crossing the existing A47 between the villages.
- The route passes predominantly through open farm land. The remaining existing A47 would, where unaffected by the new dual carriageway, become part of the local road network.

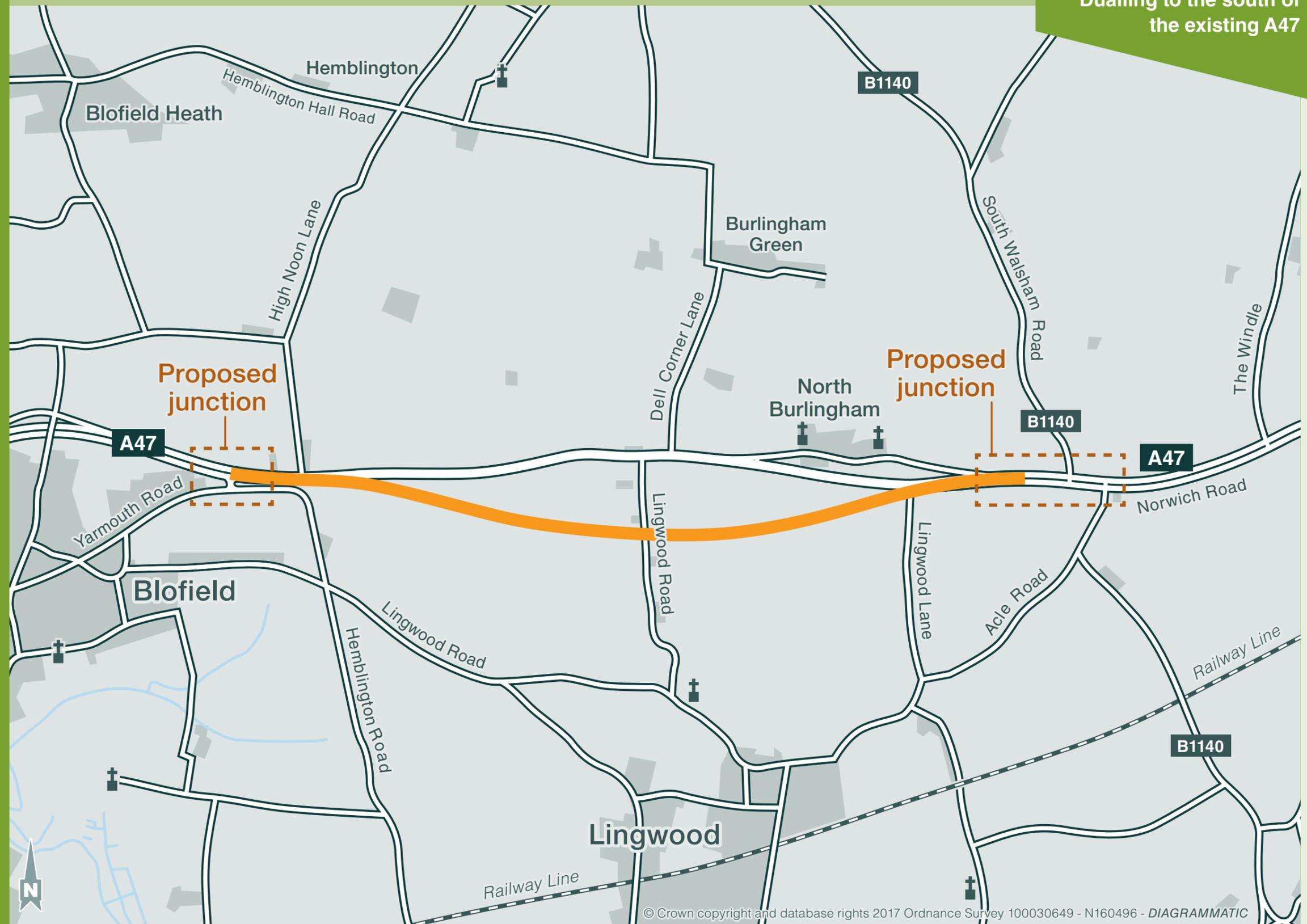


Proposed option 2
Dualling to the north and to the south of the existing A47

Proposed option 3

Option 3 proposes building a new dual carriageway to the south with the following:

- The proposed new dual carriageway for this option follows an alignment running to the south of the A47. The route passes predominantly through open farm land.
- The proposed route of the A47 corridor to the south of the existing A47 is effectively a new highway corridor, so we would need to acquire land along the route to accommodate the improvements.
- The remaining existing A47 would, where unaffected by the new dual carriageway, become part of the local road network.



Proposed option 4

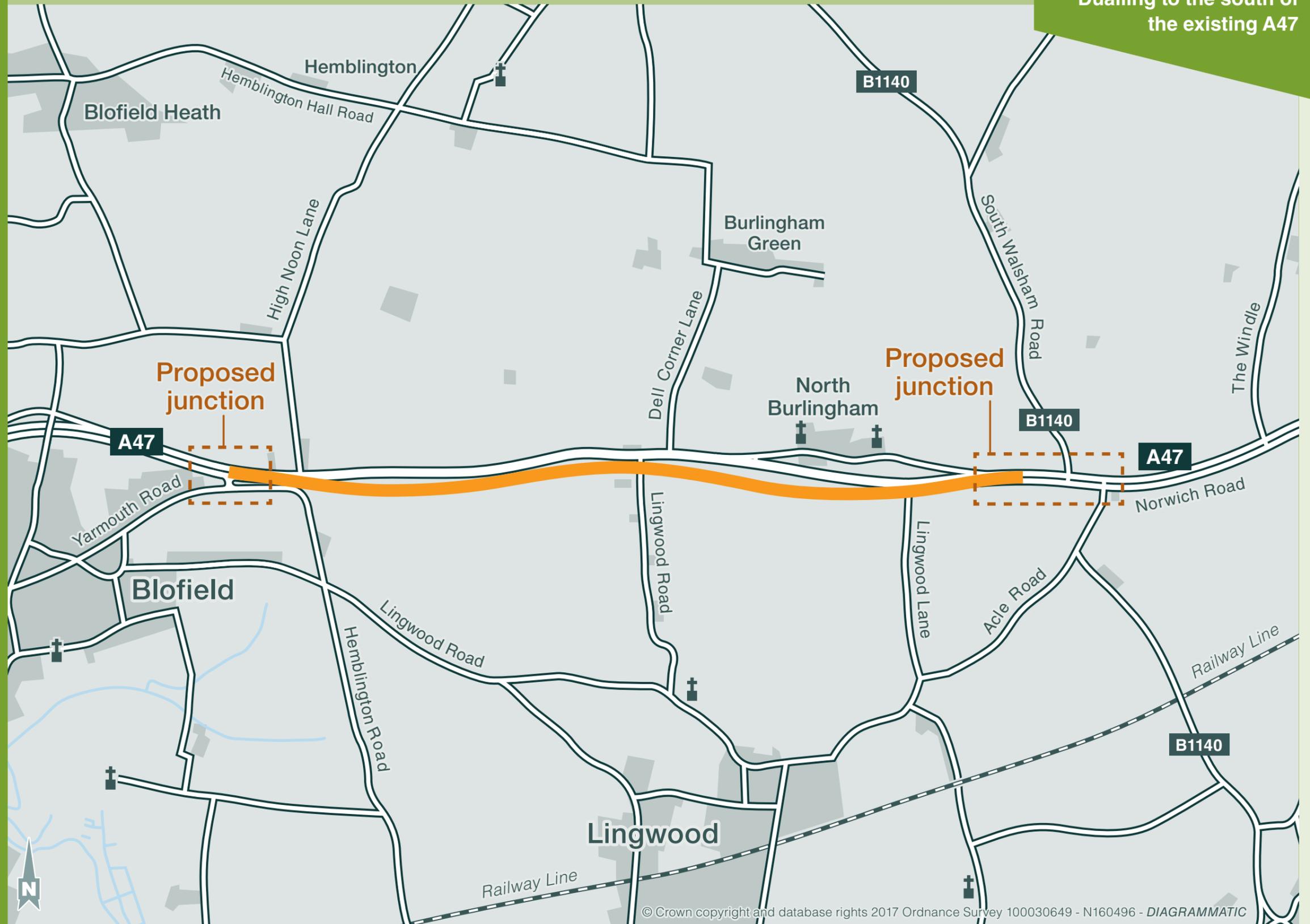
Option 4 proposes building a new dual carriageway to the south with the following:

- The proposed new dual carriageway for this option follows an alignment running just to the south of the A47. The route passes predominantly through open farm land.
- The proposed route of the A47 corridor to the south of the existing A47 is effectively a new highway corridor, so we would need to acquire land along the route.
- The remaining existing A47 would, where unaffected by the new dual carriageway, become part of the local road network.

Alternative options

A number of potential alternative options were considered as part of the development process during 2016. These options did not perform well against the objectives therefore were not progressed any further.

Proposed option 4
Dualling to the south of
the existing A47

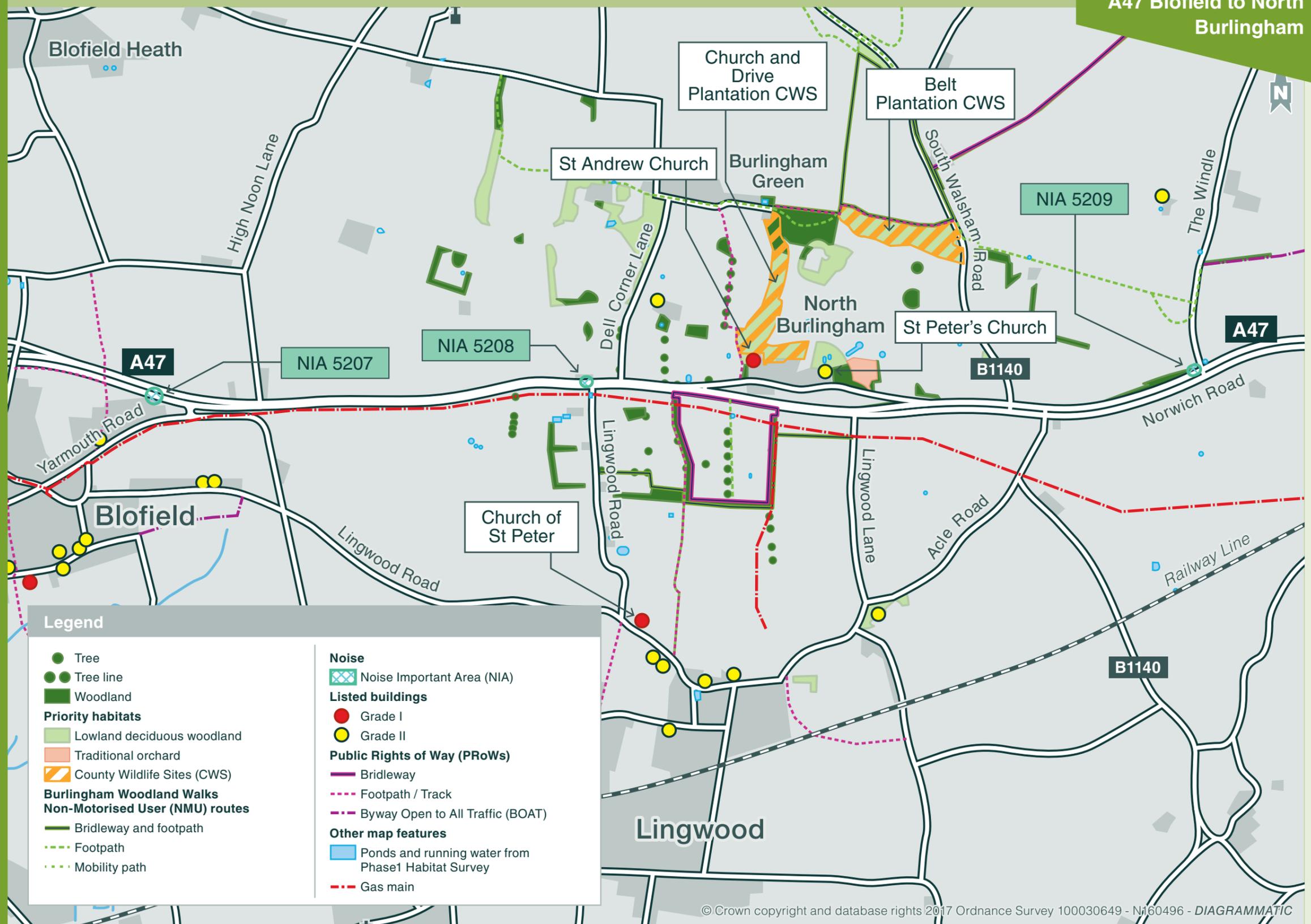


5. Respecting the environment

Whichever option is selected to improve the route, we will safeguard and protect the local environment. We are surveying the local surroundings, and the results will be used to decide ways to both reduce any negative effects and contribute towards improving the local environment. We will plan any construction to minimise effects on the environment.

It is highly likely that we would need to acquire land adjacent to the existing route. All options pass predominantly through open farm land.

Please see the environmental constraints plan for details.



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Local communities

The public rights of way network will remain in place or alternatives will be provided. Pedestrian and cycle routes and crossings will also be maintained around the existing carriageway or replaced where required.

We will use earth mounds and planting where possible to help screen the route from nearby properties. New lighting will be designed to minimise light pollution.

Landscape

To reduce the visual impact of the scheme, we will plant areas of trees, shrubs and grassland. Where possible, we will use native species that are local to the area.

Wildlife and nature conservation

The study area for the scheme includes a range of habitats that support different plant and wildlife species. We are currently carrying out ecological surveys in the area to identify any evidence of protected species, including bats, badgers, water voles, great crested newts, white-clawed crayfish, reptiles and birds.

If we find any evidence of protected species, we will ensure that these are considered as part of the design stage and that there are appropriate mitigation measures in place to reduce any impacts of the scheme. This work will be carried out in consultation with Natural England and Norfolk Wildlife Trust as well as local interest groups.

The design will allow for habitat replacement and create opportunities for new habitats.

Historic environment

The area contains a variety of features of cultural heritage importance, including archaeological sites and listed buildings.

We will include various measures in the scheme design to reduce the impacts on these areas.

Air quality

Our initial assessment shows that there will be no significant changes in air quality for the residential properties in the area. Most residential areas are expected to experience improved air quality as a result of the scheme, due to improved traffic flows.

We will monitor the effects on air quality in the area with the aim of meeting national air quality objectives.

Noise

Our initial noise assessment shows that there should be no significant changes in noise near the existing route. We will use low noise road surfacing and the detailed design will include further assessments to determine whether any additional noise mitigation, such as barriers, is required.

We will pay particular attention to the properties nearest to the proposed route.

Water

We will provide appropriate drainage to deal with the surface water from the road. Existing watercourses and groundwater will be protected with balancing ponds, pollution control devices and water treatment features.

6. Next steps

Preferred route

This consultation is your opportunity to express your views on the proposals at an early stage of development and to inform the selection of a preferred route. After the consultation ends, we will publish a report summarising the responses. Following this, we will make recommendations for further development of the scheme.

Subject to the findings of the consultation, a preferred route announcement will be made in late 2017 and the pre-application stage of the development consent process will begin.

Development Consent Order application

This scheme is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project under the Planning Act 2008. As such, we are required to make an application for a Development Consent Order in order to obtain permission to construct the scheme. The application will be made to the Planning Inspectorate who will examine the application in public hearings and then make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport who will decide on whether or not the project will go ahead.

We currently intend to make our application by summer 2018. Prior to the application, you will have another opportunity to have your say with a public consultation on our preliminary design proposals.

More information about the Development Consent Order process can be found on the Planning Inspectorate's website:

<http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk>

7. What happens next?

We are at the early stages of this project and there are many stages to come. This includes another opportunity to have your say before a final decision is made.

Your views are important to us. We will consider all responses to this consultation. Your feedback will help inform the decision on the preferred solution.

Below are the key milestones and the steps we plan to take before we start construction:

Summer 2017

We will analyse the consultation responses and undertake additional technical work

Autumn 2017

If there is a compelling case for the scheme and a suitable option is selected, a preferred route will be announced

Autumn 2017

We will engage with communities, land owners and stakeholders on the preferred route and design

Winter 2017/18

Statutory public consultation on the preferred route

Summer 2018

Submit an application for a Development Consent Order (Planning Application)

Winter 2019/20

Decision on the Development Consent Order (estimated)

Construction starts*

(estimated)

*Construction on the A47 corridor improvement is likely to start in spring 2020. We may need to sequence the improvements along the route to manage the disruption to customers and local communities.



8. Share your views

This is the first stage in our consultation process and we would like to know what you think about the proposed options. We will listen to your views and publish a Consultation Report to inform the selection of a preferred route.

Join us at one of our events. Members of our team will be on hand to answer your questions.

Public information events

Venue	Date	Time
Lingwood Village Hall	Wednesday 29 March	3pm - 8pm
Blofield Courthouse	Friday 31 March	10am - 5pm
Lingwood Village Hall	Saturday 1 April	10am - 2pm

Confidentiality and data protection

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want any information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence.

For more information about what information can be requested under the FOIA, see:

<https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/official-information>

Highways England will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

9. How to respond

Please only respond using one of the following channels, which have been set up for the specific purpose of this consultation:



Online: www.highways.gov.uk/a47improvement



Email: A47BlofieldtoNorthBurlinghamRIS@highwaysengland.co.uk



Post: You can write to us or post paper copy responses to:
FREEPOST A47 Blofield to North Burlingham

We cannot accept responsibility for ensuring responses that are sent to addresses other than those described above are included in the consultation process. All responses must include at least your postcode. Please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If responding on behalf of an organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.

The final date we will accept consultation responses will be no later than 11:59pm on Friday 21 April 2017.

For further information about the scheme or this consultation, please call the Highways England Customer Contact Centre on **0300 123 5000**.





A47 Blofield to North Burlingham

If you need help accessing this or any other Highways England information, please call **0300 123 5000** and we will help you.

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This document is also available on our website at www.gov.uk/highways

If you have any enquiries about this publication email info@highwaysengland.co.uk or call **0300 123 5000***. Please quote the Highways England publications code **PR245/16**.

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